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UNCLAS VATICAN 003564

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE: LEVIN; NEA/NGA

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SUBJECT: CARITAS OPERATIONS TO CONTINUE IN IRAQ DESPITE  
RISING THREATS TO PERSONNEL

1.Caritas, the humanitarian aid agency of the Catholic Church, will continue operations to support Iraqi reconstruction despite a recent increase in the threat level to its personnel. In a statement issued September 10, responding in part to the abduction of two Italian aid workers in Baghdad, Caritas said that its Iraq office works primarily with children and young mothers, administering 14 centers in the Baghdad, Mosul, Karakoush, Kirkuk and Bassra regions. Two of these are jointly administered with the Red Crescent.

2.More than 100 local nutrition, engineering and technical experts, along with local volunteers have to date  
e assisted some 24,000 children and 10,000 mothers and pregnant women with two million euros of overseas aid. Part of this figure has been spent on supplying hospitals in Baghdad and Mosul, as well as seven clinics. Other Caritas projects include feeding programs for at-risk groups -- the homeless, elderly, disabled, orphans and widows without family support. Food aid is being supplemented by projects to restore clean water. Planned reconstruction work for homes destroyed in fighting is on hold at present because of the security situation.

3.Comment: Caritas' international federation will continue to provide partnership funding for Caritas Iraq's activities in Iraq. Using local personnel, Caritas lowers the risk of attack or abduction for its staff. Caritas has publicly condemned terrorist acts that target aid workers.  
End comment.

[1](#)4. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

Nicholson

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